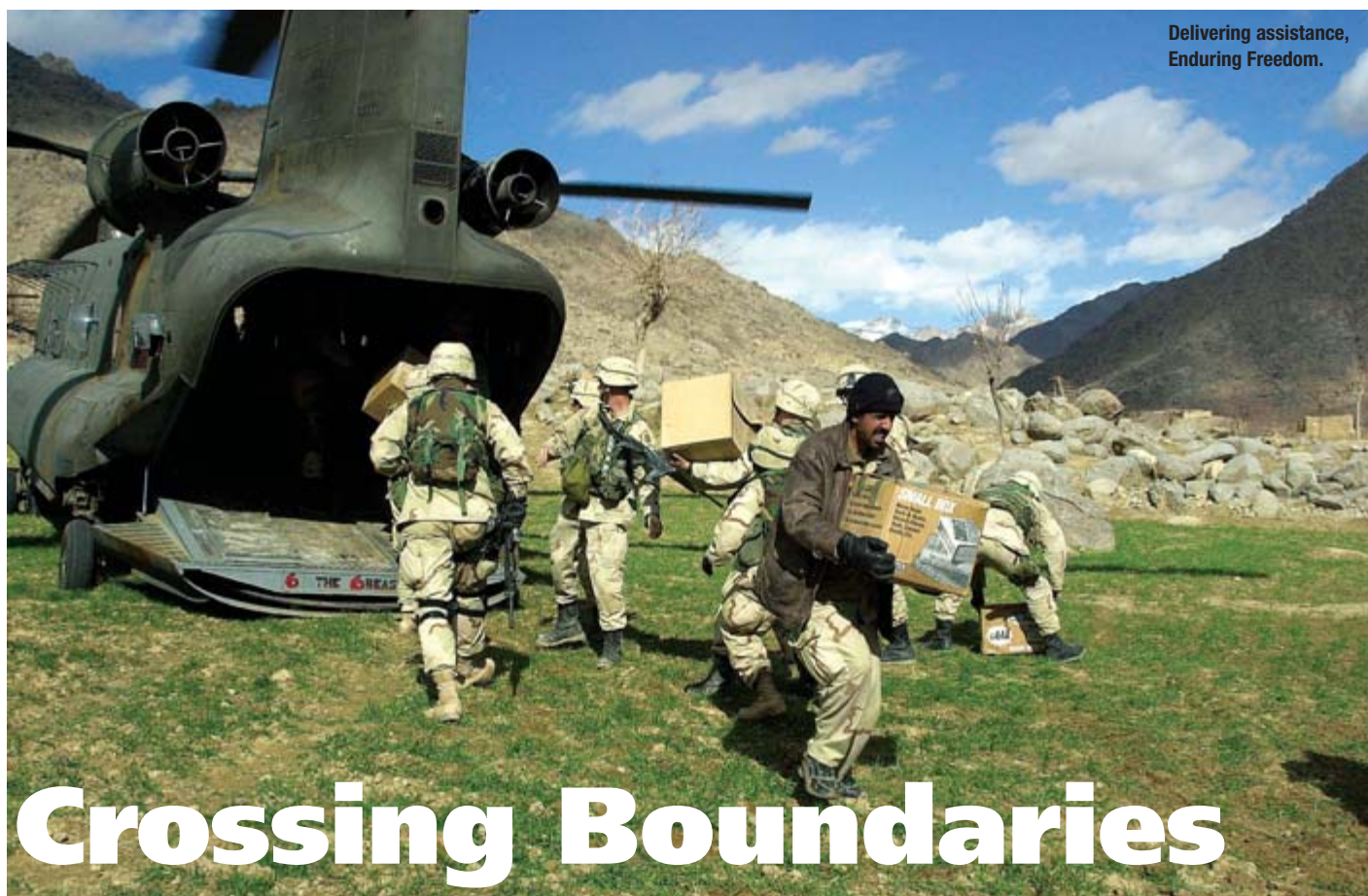


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# Crossing Boundaries

## Interagency Cooperation and the Military

By PATRICK N. KELLEHER

**T**he expanding role of combatant commanders in the international arena necessitates greater interagency linkages. The concept of full spectrum dominance in *Joint Vision 2020*, especially in the context of military operations other than war (MOOTW), must recognize that the intermingling of humanitarian assistance, combat operations, and nationbuilding is indicative of future responses to security challenges.

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In the past, narrowly defined responsibilities were carried out in spite of interagency rivalry. But in a multipolar world characterized by asymmetric threats and MOOTW, the traditional lines of authority must be overcome. In the parlance of *JV 2020*, full spectrum dominance foresees "U.S. forces operating unilaterally or with multinational and interagency partners to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the full range of military options." As such, it reflects the elements of victory that the President cited after 9/11. But recognizing the building blocks and constructing a coherent response are two different matters.

While there have been calls for better institutional links among agencies, doubt arises over the

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means of ensuring a synchronized response. Even given larger foreign assistance requests by the Pentagon, one press account described regional commanders as the “modern-day equivalent to the Roman Empire’s proconsuls” who serve as “unconventional centers of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>1</sup> The primary instrument of national power responsible for implementing foreign policy is arguably the Department of Defense. Although the efficacy of unified commanders serving as lead agents in this arena is open to debate, they are key players in realizing foreign policy objectives.

Developmental assistance and humanitarian aid as administered under the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are the most obvious manifestations of foreign policy that can be compared to military peacetime engagement. Thus cross-cultural cooperation in peace furnishes the basis for rapidly fusing capabilities in contingency response, particularly for MOOTW. Regardless of the need for more effective interagency coordination, room for improvement remains.

The links between USAID and regional commanders suggests two areas of improvement. Though a means of conducting interagency coordination exists on the strategic level, coordination on the strategic/operational and, to an extent,

the tactical level must be enhanced. A coordinated response blends civilian assets in mission planning and execution to manage nonmilitary resources for MOOTW and minimize the diversion of resources from military objectives.

Only in that way can a synergistic approach be developed to attain peacetime and contingency goals.

The first step involves creating an additional position on unified command staffs: a senior humanitarian advisor, equivalent in rank to political advisors (POLADs). Just as the latter provides recommendations on political-military interaction, the former will function as the primary facilitator of synchronized development and humanitarian activities, from military actions and peacetime engagement to combat operations and post-conflict activities.

The next step is improving coordination between the humanitarian/developmental assistance community and regional commands and involves convening annual or biennial planning conferences of desk and action officers. In addition to military planners and USAID regional experts, a regional interagency conference would

include specialists from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency, and National Security Council.

## Existing Coordination

National Security Presidential Directive 1, issued in February 2001, redefined interagency arrangements under policy coordination committees to manage development and implementation of national security policy. Replacing interagency working groups, committees reflect earlier regional and functional organizations by providing recommendations based on the consolidated input of the Departments of State and Defense, among other agencies. According to Joint Pub 3-08, *Interagency Coordination during Joint Operations*, the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Staff execute most interagency coordination on the strategic level. This coordination sets the stage for directing commands on both the operational and tactical levels. Although an evaluation of this system is beyond the scope of this analysis, it depends largely on personalities. This warrants note since an institutionalized method for policy coordination on the strategic level exists. Institutional weakness is apparent on the strategic/operational level when policy formulation evolves into policy implementation. Despite the need for doctrine on coordination for combatant commands down, which is explicitly outlined in joint publications, existing institutional linkages are insufficient.

Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, outlines the requirement for an integrated and coordinated response:

*Joint force commanders should ensure that their joint operations are integrated and synchronized in time, space, and purpose with the actions of other military force (multinational operations) and nonmilitary organizations (government organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the U.N.).*

This publication also states that integrating the Armed Forces with the capabilities of other Federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, allied and friendly countries, and the United Nations is required for decisive joint combat power. On the strategic/operational level, combatant commands have two institutional means of synchronizing interagency actions ongoing in theater: POLADs and country teams. Various commands have adopted additional local (and often ad hoc) mechanisms, but these attempts at coordination fall short of qualifying as institutional. Without detracting from the utility of incorporating both sources in regional planning, neither mechanism provides the range of

## a coordinated response blends civilian assets in mission planning and execution to manage nonmilitary resources for MOOTW





USAID (Martin Lueders)

Distributing food in Afghanistan.

feedback to properly integrate nonmilitary elements into joint or combined operations.

Foreign service officers from the Department of State, POLADs use their extensive regional experience to help commanders translate political goals into military objectives. They also facilitate communication between political and military planners by virtue of their expertise on the intricacies of foreign policy. While POLADs have experience and political *savoir-faire* to ensure linkage with the Department of State, they do not contribute the same degree of coordination with other agencies and nongovernmental organizations that provide developmental and humanitarian assistance. This sector is the major provider of aid in addition to the United Nations, International Committee of the Red Cross, and International Organization for Migration.

The Web site of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance within the Department of State, confirms this relationship:

*U.S. refugee policy is based on the premise that the care of refugees and other conflict victims and the pursuit of permanent solutions for refugee crises are*

*shared international responsibilities. Accordingly, most overseas assistance funds will be contributed to programs administered by international organizations.<sup>2</sup>*

A comparison of recent allocations for programs in and around Sudan substantiates the role of USAID as the primary conduit to NGOs as opposed to the Department of State. In FY99, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration provided \$100 million to the United Nations and Red Cross in response to Africa-wide appeals, some for assistance to Sudan. Donations to NGOs with regional programs totaled only \$2.5 million. At the same time, USAID gave \$95 million in food and grants to organizations offering relief in the same area. NGOs received \$86 million and international organizations \$8 million.

The same pattern emerged in FY01, when the United States gave \$83.8 million in direct aid to Afghanistan and Central Asia, of which \$50.5 million in USAID funds went to NGO assistance for Afghanistan. Contributions by the Department of State that totalled \$32.6 million were directed primarily to international organizations in response

Providing relief in  
Bosnia-Herzegovina.



982 Signal Company (Tarina Reed)

to regional appeals; only \$5 million went to NGOs working with Afghan beneficiaries. To date in FY02, the Government has obligated \$365 million for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Central Asia. USAID has provided \$200 million in food and direct assistance while the \$92 million State Department contributions have again responded to regional and emergency appeals. The balance reflects contributions by agencies such as the Department of Agriculture.

The other tool available to commanders for operational level interagency coordination is the country team. Headed by the ambassador and composed of representatives of various agencies, it can provide specific recommendations on peacetime engagement or contingency responses. CJCS Manual 3113.01A, *Theater Engagement Planning*, refers to the role of the teams in contingencies. While providing an interagency perspective, country teams have disadvantages. By definition their focus is limited; commands may not have adequate staff to interpret competing priorities advocated by various teams in any region. Secondly, because POLADs as senior government liaisons to commanders represent only one of the many agencies on the country team, the potential exists for biased priorities and misunderstanding. Lastly, because USAID does not maintain

staff in every diplomatic mission, country teams do not offer an accurate representation of all ongoing or funded efforts; while the United States has embassies or consulates in 144 countries, USAID has missions in 84. Developing a theater-wide operational picture of governmental, non-governmental, and international activities becomes more problematic. The critical need is finding ways to connect commands with agencies that provide humanitarian and developmental assistance, specifically with USAID. The necessity of such a linkage becomes clear when one looks at the commonality among peacetime engagement and developmental and humanitarian assistance programs and in analyzing the operational necessities required to ensure unity of effort in contingency operations.

### Peacetime Engagement

In essence, the twin objectives of promoting democracy and avoiding conflict underlie most foreign peacetime engagement activities regardless of the agency or originating organization. The stated purpose of USAID, as an independent agency that receives guidance from the Secretary of State, is advancing foreign policy goals by supporting long-term and equitable economic growth, agriculture, and trade; enhancing global health; and promoting democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance. The USAID mandate reflects a key element of national military strategy, which addresses operations in terms of shaping, responding, and preparing. The latest national military strategy stated: "By increasing understanding and reducing uncertainty, engagement builds constructive security arrangements, helps promote the development of democratic institutions, and helps keep some countries from becoming adversaries." While updated strategy is forthcoming, the necessity to shape the international environment will undoubtedly remain an essential element. To quantify and provide structure and coherence to shaping operations, each commander develops a theater engagement plan. As outlined in CJCS Manual 3113.01A, the plan is a biennial effort to "link [unified command] planned regional engagement activities with national strategic objectives," in part by establishing regional priorities and including the method to be used in determining those priorities. The range of engagement activities to support priorities includes military-to-military contacts, security assistance, and combined exercises. Theater engagement plans include humanitarian assistance as one of their areas of focus.

Though combatant commands develop their theater plans to structure engagement, regional

and functional bureaus within USAID develop approaches to provide frameworks and set priorities annually for humanitarian and developmental assistance. Specifically targeting diverse areas such as health care, agriculture, education, conflict transition, and disaster mitigation, USAID foreign assistance embraces activities to foster economic and political development in support of national interests. As primarily a donor, USAID implements its priorities by funding nongovernmental and international organizations, including the United Nations. Choosing organizations and programs to fund enables the agency to direct its identified objectives. In addition, its officials interface with donors from Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and other countries and agencies of the United Nations to develop and maintain a common humanitarian picture, establish boundaries of responsibility, balance priorities, and synchronize activities.

**as primarily a donor, USAID implements its priorities by funding nongovernmental and international organizations**

Although the USAID and command approaches to peacetime engagement may vary, the common purpose necessitates mutual understanding, sharing information, and concurrence on synchronization of mutual benefits similar to the continuous process of worldwide developmental/humanitarian coordination. That is not to claim that interagency programmatic implementation on the ground is desirable in every case. Regardless of implementation decisions, military priorities developed without factoring in regional expertise from other U.S. agencies precludes the efficient and effective implementation of a vision. Until there is synchronization between engagement initiatives and foreign assistance, America loses opportunities to capitalize on comparative advantages, does not make the best use of resources, and could fail to reach strategic objectives.

### Unity of Effort

In the case of humanitarian assistance, cooperation must maintain a common response. As Joint Pub 3-16, *Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations*, states, interagency relationships must be “defined with respect to military support before commencement of operations other than war.” Although some coordination mechanisms may be established immediately prior to operations, there is generally insufficient opportunity to develop and maintain relationships to maximize synergy and ensure unity of effort. Instead of focusing on actions and outcomes, time and effort are expended in developing relations. The inability to sustain an institutional linkage was noted at a symposium on civil-military connections which

concluded: “There is a history of relearning the requirement for and the modalities of civil-military operations about as often as there is a major change of command or new complex contingency.” As one participant, General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.), noted, “The status quo is [ad hoc] every time. So in the next conference, someone will say that they have just discovered NGOs, just discovered that they are different, just discovered that you actually need to coordinate with them. . . . There needs to be change.”<sup>3</sup>

While the simultaneous pursuit of humanitarian and military objectives in Afghanistan was somewhat unique, coordination was virtually nonexistent before the bombing. Because avoiding famine was a priority, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) established the Coalition Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) to facilitate linkage. Under guidance of the coalition joint forces land component commander with headquarters in Kabul, the task force also maintained a liaison cell at headquarters in Tampa. To effect coordination with the humanitarian community, CJCMOTF created the humanitarian affairs working group. Members included coalition partners; representatives from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) at USAID; representatives from InterAction, an NGO umbrella organization; and the United Nations.

On the ground in Afghanistan, CJCMOTF established several coalition humanitarian liaison cells, essentially equivalent to civil-military operation centers (CMOCs), in several cities to conduct tactical level liaison with NGO and USAID representatives.<sup>4</sup> According to officials, interagency synchronization, although initially effective, has gradually become less so on both the tactical and operational levels. The problem does not stem from the organizational structure built to facilitate cooperation but from the lack of connectivity between regional combatant commands—in this case CENTCOM—and USAID. In part because of cultural reluctance to collocate on the ground with coalition humanitarian liaison cells as well as nonpermanent staffing provided to the command by OFDA, weakened coordination links also derive from the increasing tendency, at least from the humanitarian perspective, for military planners to be less inclusive of nonmilitary elements since the threat of famine has abated. Although coordination meetings still occur, USAID officials cite a decreased ability to access higher-level CENTCOM staff.<sup>5</sup>

One issue in particular that has damaged humanitarian-military relationships, and that could have been avoided with a better communication



process, is the practice of some military personnel wearing civilian clothes in Afghanistan. A perceived disregard for humanitarian security concerns by CENTCOM has not been conducive to continued collaboration. While the cooperative relations between the USAID disaster assistance response team and coalition humanitarian liaison cells has helped synchronize reconstruction projects in the larger rebuilding effort, tensions with regard to force protection threaten to impede unity of effort. Humanitarian workers derive security from impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Adhering to these principles enables humanitarian personnel, specifically NGOs, to operate in otherwise insecure areas. Workers who abide by these principles—in that they do not represent a government—can venture where others cannot.

From the humanitarian perspective, military personnel in mufti, who are armed and engaged in nominally humanitarian activities, put civilians at risk because their enemies do not differentiate.

### senior humanitarian advisors would help synchronize developmental and humanitarian activities

The humanitarian community thinks that CENTCOM does not appreciate that while civilian clothes may increase near-term protection of the military, it reduces the security of nonmilitary personnel.

What the humanitarian community perceives as unresponsiveness and lack of concern over NGOs reinforces the stereotype of the Armed Forces as inflexible and myopic. A long-term solution that improved interagency cooperation would avoid misunderstanding and balance the concerns of both communities against mission requirements.

### The Right Direction

The coordinated approach used at U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) offers a model for institutionalizing linkages between humanitarian/development communities and the military. As a result of command responses to natural disasters in the region, informal coordination has evolved for the type of interagency response required for MOOTW, in this case disaster assistance. Aside from representing only a partial solution, the disadvantages are conducting operations on an ad hoc basis. OFDA, as the lead agency for international relief, maintains a liaison officer who assists in developing the SOUTHCOM plan. Working in the directorate of logistics (J-4), this officer assists in developing the humanitarian affairs portion of the theater engagement plan and participates in other interagency planning when required. He serves as the focal point in contingencies to ensure a coordination of command assets, existing NGO capabilities, and actions by

nonmilitary agencies recommended by OFDA. The liaison officer generally acts through POLADS to raise visibility on issues warranting closer attention from commanders. The success of this symbiotic arrangement in facilitating engagement and relief operations, although it is still ad hoc and informal, shows that it is a point of departure from which to mold an institutional solution.

### Finding A Solution

A two-pronged approach can institutionalize humanitarian affairs and military linkages and improve information sharing and planning. The first step involves senior humanitarian advisors. Like POLADS, who tutor unified commanders on political-military affairs, these advisors would help synchronize developmental and humanitarian activities in a range of military actions from peacetime engagement to combat operations and post-conflict situations. Their assignments could be normal rotational tours for foreign service officers or retired USAID officials.

Commanders would be provided with another official with extensive regional expertise to institutionalize relations between the military and humanitarian communities, increasing the level of familiarity. Providing access for commanders and their staffs to the humanitarian community may preclude the continuous process Zinni identified. In planning peacetime engagement, advisors could maximize the comparative advantage of humanitarian assistance to support mutual objectives. Moreover, they would ensure compliance with Title 10, U.S. Code, which requires that military humanitarian and civic action complement rather than duplicate other forms of social or economic assistance provided by the United States.

Institutionalization would avoid tendencies to adopt ad hoc approaches in operations short of war, including post-conflict transition. Maintaining senior humanitarian advisors on command staffs would provide a focal point for coordinating crisis response. As subject area experts within commands, advisors could maintain contacts with other agencies as well as nongovernmental and international organizations to quickly create liaison and planning cells. Their presence could ensure that the intent of Joint Publications 3-0 and 3-16 is achieved through early and continuous joint and interagency planning by weighing the capabilities of other organizations in assessments conducted by commanders. Finally, despite the frequency of NGO and military interaction, there are cultural and historical biases often based on stereotyping. These advisors would generate a more positive linkage by institutionalizing



55th Signal Company (Albert Eaddy)

Bringing medical help  
to Afghan people.

recognition of geopolitical realities calling for coordination. In effect, shifting the paradigm by deconstructing previous assumptions will require adaptation which leads to more effective implementation of foreign policy over the long run.

The second step in improving interagency coordination is planning conferences. As one former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs noted, "Rather than viewing diplomacy and force as opposing ends of the spectrum of national policy—with one used when the other fails—it is important to recognize that each must seamlessly support the other. . . ."<sup>6</sup> The amalgamation of multiagency planning on the operational level by sharing ideas and visions offers an avenue to achieve this seamless integration. Although the logistic and planning challenges could be significant, the advantages of providing a forum for orchestrating regional activities by different agencies would likely outweigh administrative obstacles.

Since this effort pertains to the relationship between regional commands and USAID, a shared planning effort would complement the activities of senior humanitarian advisors and enhance unity of effort across a range of operations. In addition to mutual understanding, bridging the cultural divide, and disproving stereotypes, joint planning could draw on a wealth of regional expertise. As opposed to military officers who are frequently reassigned, USAID officers spend much longer developing their expertise, often living for four or more years in country. This is not to claim that a planning conference will result in increased interaction in the field. In fact, from a humanitarian perspective, a degree of separation is desirable

for everything save for a contingency response to maintain at least a perception of neutrality or impartiality. Nonetheless, the contribution of information sharing to a common regional vision to enhance planning and execution is clear.

The military and humanitarian affairs communities have traditionally been at opposite ends of the spectrum, according to the popular stereotype. Many may argue that a synergistic relationship is neither desirable nor possible. But in a multipolar world, asymmetric threats and the frequency of military intercession in operations short of war require overcoming interagency rivalry to achieve full spectrum dominance. As the Armed Forces learned in Desert One, interservice rivalry leads to failure. The global war on terrorism and the summons by the President to synchronize instruments of national power comprise a watershed for breaking down barriers. Interagency coordination must be improved for the United States to continue its dominant role across a range of military operations. The opportunity to sow the seeds of interagency cooperation should not be missed.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dana Priest, "U.S. Commanders Wield Rising Clout, Autonomy," *The Washington Post*, September 28, 2000, A-1.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration Funding, see reference at <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/fund/>.

<sup>3</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, "Beyond Jointness: The Civil Military Dimensions of Peace Operations and Humanitarian Assistance," paper delivered at a conference held at Fort Lesley J. McNair (Washington: National Defense University, June 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Tom Dolan, Military Liaison Unit, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and DART Team Leader, Afghanistan 2001, personal interview, April 12, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Catlin, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance liaison to U.S. Central and U.S. Southern Commands, interview by the author, April 12, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Eric D. Newsome, "Security Assistance: The Bridge Between Diplomacy and Use of Force," *U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda* (December 1999), p. 9.